

## HERODOTUS Book VIII: Lines 1-39

~6K words (Read aloud time ~40 min + map pointing)

\*Upsetting line #33 is less graphic in this translation, but I highlighted it for you.

1. Those of the Hellenes who had been appointed to serve in the fleet were these:—the Athenians furnished a hundred and twenty-seven ships, and the Plataians moved by valour and zeal for the service, although they had had no practice in seamanship, yet joined with the Athenians in manning their ships. The Corinthians furnished forty ships, the Megarians twenty; the Chalkidians manned twenty ships with which the Athenians furnished them; [1](#) the Eginetans furnished eighteen ships, the Sikyonians twelve, the Lacedemonians ten, the Epidaurians eight, the Eretrians seven, the Troizenians five, the Styrians two, the Keians two ships [2](#) and two fifty-oared galleys, while the Locrians of Opus came also to the assistance of the rest with seven fifty-oared galleys.

2. These were those who joined in the expedition to Artemision, and I have mentioned them according to the number [3](#) of the ships which they severally supplied: so the number of the ships which were assembled at Artemision was (apart from the fifty-oared galleys) two hundred and seventy-one: and the commander who had the supreme power was furnished by the Spartans, namely Eurybiades son of Eurycleides, since the allies said that they would not follow the lead of the Athenians, but unless a Lacedemonian were leader they would break up the expedition which was to be made:

3, for it had come to be said at first, even before they sent to Sicily to obtain allies, that the fleet ought to be placed in the charge of the Athenians. So as the allies opposed this, the Athenians yielded, having it much at heart that Hellas should be saved, and perceiving that if they should have disagreement with one another about the leadership, Hellas would perish: and herein they judged rightly, for disagreement between those of the same race is worse than war undertaken with one consent by as much as war is worse than peace. Being assured then of this truth, they did not contend, but gave way for so long time as they were urgently in need of the allies; and that this was so their conduct proved; for when, after repelling the Persian from themselves, they were now contending for his land and no longer for their own, they alleged the insolence of Pausanias as a pretext and took away the leadership from the Lacedemonians. This however took place afterwards.

4. But at this time these Hellenes also who had come to Artemision, [4](#) when they saw that a great number of ships had put in to Aphetai and that everything was filled with their armament, were struck with fear, because the fortunes of the Barbarians had different issue from that which they expected, and they deliberated about retreating from Artemision to the inner parts of Hellas. And the Euboeans perceiving that they were so deliberating, asked Eurybiades to stay there by them for a short time, until they should have removed out of their land their children, and their households; and as they did not persuade him, they went elsewhere and persuaded Themistocles the commander of the Athenians by a payment of thirty talents, the condition being that the fleet should stay and fight the sea-battle in front of Euboea.

5. Themistocles then caused the Hellenes to stay in the following manner:—to Eurybiades he imparted five talents of the sum with the pretence that he was giving it from himself; and when Eurybiades had been persuaded by him to change his resolution, Adeimantos son of Okytos, the Corinthian commander, was the only one of all the others who still made a struggle, saying that he would sail away from Artemision and would not stay with the others: to him therefore Themistocles said with an oath: "Thou at least shalt not leave us, for I will give thee greater gifts than the king of the Medes would send to thee, if thou shouldst desert thy allies." Thus he spoke, and at the same time he sent to the ship of Adeimantos three talents of silver. So these all [5](#) had been persuaded by gifts to change their resolution, and at the same time the request of the Euboeans had been gratified and Themistocles himself gained money; and it was not known that he had the rest of the money, but those who received a share of this money were fully persuaded that it had come from the Athenian State for this purpose.

6. Thus they remained in Euboea and fought a sea-battle; and it came to pass as follows:—when the Barbarians had arrived at Aphetai about the beginning of the afternoon, having been informed even before they came that a few ships of the Hellenes were stationed about Artemision and now seeing them for themselves, they were eager to attack them, to see if they could capture them. Now they did not think it good yet to sail against them directly for this reason,—for fear namely that the Hellenes, when they saw them sailing against them, should set forth to take flight and darkness should come upon them in their flight; and so they were likely (thought the Persians) [6](#) to get away; whereas it was right, according to their calculation, that not even the fire-bearer [7](#) should escape and save his life.

7. With a view to this then they contrived as follows:—of the whole number of their ships they parted off two hundred and sent them round to sail by Caphereus and round Geriastos to the Euripos, going outside Skiathos so that they might not be sighted by the enemy as they sailed round Euboea: and their purpose was that with these coming up by that way, and blocking the enemies' retreat, and themselves advancing against them directly, they might surround them on all sides. Having formed this plan they proceeded to send off the ships which were appointed for this, and they themselves had no design of attacking the Hellenes on that day nor until the signal agreed upon should be displayed to them by those who were sailing round, to show that they had arrived. These ships, I say, they were sending round, and meanwhile they were numbering the rest at Aphetai.

8. During this time, while these were numbering their ships, it happened thus:—there was in that camp a man of Skione named Skyllias, as a diver the best of all the men of that time, who also in the shipwreck which took place by Pelion had saved for the Persians many of their goods and many of them also he had acquired for himself: this Skyllias it appears had had an intention even before this of deserting to the side of the Hellenes, but it had not been possible for him to do so then. In what manner after this attempt he did actually come to the Hellenes, I am not able to say with certainty, but I marvel if the tale is true which is reported; for it is said that he dived into the sea at Aphetai and did not come up till he reached Artemision, having traversed here somewhere about eighty furlongs through the sea. Now there are told about this man several other tales which seem likely to be false, but some also which are true: about this matter however let it be stated as my opinion that he came to Artemision in a boat. Then when

he had come, he forthwith informed the commanders about the shipwreck, how it had come to pass, and of the ships which had been sent away to go round Euboea.

9. Hearing this the Hellenes considered the matter with one another; and after many things had been spoken, the prevailing opinion was that they should remain there that day and encamp on shore, and then, when midnight was past, they should set forth and go to meet those ships which were sailing round. After this however, as no one sailed out to attack them, they waited for the coming of the late hours of the afternoon and sailed out themselves to attack the Barbarians, desiring to make a trial both of their manner of fighting and of the trick of breaking their line. [8](#)

10. And seeing them sailing thus against them with few ships, not only the others in the army of Xerxes but also their commanders judged them to be moved by mere madness, and they themselves also put out their ships to sea, supposing that they would easily capture them: and their expectation was reasonable enough, since they saw that the ships of the Hellenes were few, while theirs were many times as numerous and sailed better. Setting their mind then on this, they came round and enclosed them in the middle. Then so many of the Ionians as were kindly disposed to the Hellenes and were serving in the expedition against their will, counted it a matter of great grief to themselves when they saw them being surrounded and felt assured that not one of them would return home, so feeble did they think the power of the Hellenes to be; while those to whom that which was happening was a source of pleasure, were vying with one another, each one endeavouring to be the first to take an Athenian ship and receive gifts from the king: for in their camps there was more report of the Athenians than of any others.

11. The Hellenes meanwhile, when the signal was given, first set themselves with prows facing the Barbarians and drew the sterns of their ships together in the middle; and when the signal was given a second time, although shut off in a small space and prow against prow, [9](#) they set to work vigorously; and they captured thirty ships of the Barbarians and also Philaon the son of Chersis, the brother of Gorgos kind of the Salaminians, who was a man of great repute in the army. Now the first of the Hellenes who captured a ship of the enemy was an Athenian, Lycomedes the son of Aischraios, and he received the prize for valour. So these, as they were contending in this sea-fight with doubtful result, were parted from one another by the coming on of night. The Hellenes accordingly sailed away to Artemision and the Barbarians to Aphetai, the contest having been widely different from their expectation. In this sea-fight Antidoros of Lemnos alone of the Hellenes who were with the king deserted to the side of the Hellenes, and the Athenians on account of this deed gave him a piece of land in Salamis.

12. When the darkness had come on, although the season was the middle of summer, yet there came on very abundant rain, which lasted through the whole of the night, with crashing thunder [10](#) from Mount Pelion; and the dead bodies and pieces of wreck were cast up at Aphetai and became entangled round the prows of the ships and struck against the blades of the oars: and the men of the army who were there, hearing these things became afraid, expecting that they would certainly perish, to such troubles had they come; for before they had had even breathing space after the shipwreck and the storm which had arisen off Mount Pelion, there had come upon them a hard sea-fight, and after the sea-fight a violent storm of rain and strong streams rushing to the sea and crashing thunder.

13. These then had such a night as I have said; and meanwhile those of them who had been appointed to sail round Euboea experienced the very same night, but against them it raged much more fiercely, inasmuch as it fell upon them while they were making their course in the open sea. And the end of it proved distressful [11](#) to them; for when the storm and the rain together came upon them as they sailed, being then off the "Hollows" of Euboea, [12](#) they were borne by the wind not knowing by what way they were carried, and were cast away upon the rocks. And all this was being brought about by God in order that the Persian force might be made more equal to that of the Hellenes and might not be by very much the larger.

14. These then, I say, were perishing about the Hollows of Euboea, and meanwhile the Barbarians at Aphetai, when day had dawned upon them, of which they were glad, were keeping their ships quiet, and were satisfied in their evil plight to remain still for the present time; but to the Hellenes there came as a reinforcement three-and-fifty Athenian ships. The coming of these gave them more courage, and at the same time they were encouraged also by a report that those of the Barbarians who had been sailing round Euboea had all been destroyed by the storm that had taken place. They waited then for the same time of day as before, and then they sailed and fell upon some Kilikian ships; and having destroyed these, they sailed away when the darkness came on, and returned to Artemision.

15. On the third day the commanders of the Barbarians, being exceedingly indignant that so small a number of ships should thus do them damage, and fearing what Xerxes might do, did not wait this time for the Hellenes to begin the fight, but passed the word of command and put out their ships to sea about the middle of the day. Now it so happened that these battles at sea and the battles on land at Thermopylai took place on the same days; and for those who fought by sea the whole aim of the fighting was concerned with the channel of Euripos, just as the aim of Leonidas and of his band was to guard the pass: the Hellenes accordingly exhorted one another not to let the Barbarians go by into Hellas; while these cheered one another on to destroy the fleet of the Hellenes and to get possession of the straits.

16. Now while the forces of Xerxes were sailing in order towards them, the Hellenes kept quiet at Artemision; and the Barbarians, having made a crescent of their ships that they might enclose them, were endeavouring to surround them. Then the Hellenes put out to sea and engaged with them; and in this battle the two sides were nearly equal to one another; for the fleet of Xerxes by reason of its great size and numbers suffered damage from itself, since the ships were thrown into confusion and ran into one another: nevertheless it stood out and did not give way, for they disdained to be turned to flight by so few ships. Many ships therefore of the Hellenes were destroyed and many men perished, but many more ships and men of the Barbarians. Thus contending they parted and went each to their own place.

17. In this sea-fight the Egyptians did best of the men who fought for Xerxes; and these, besides other great deeds which they displayed, captured five ships of the Hellenes together with their crews: while of the Hellenes those who did best on this day were the Athenians, and of the Athenians Cleinias the son of Alkibiades, who was serving with two hundred men and a ship of his own, furnishing the expense at his own proper cost.

18. Having parted, both sides gladly hastened to their moorings; and after they had separated and got away out of the sea-fight, although the Hellenes had possession of the bodies of the

dead and of the wrecks of the ships, yet having suffered severely [13](#) (and especially the Athenians, of whose ships half had been disabled), they were deliberating now about retreating to the inner parts of Hellas.

19. Themistocles however had conceived that if there should be detached from the force of the Barbarians the Ionian and Carian nations, they would be able to overcome the rest; and when the people of Euboea were driving their flocks down to that sea, [14](#) he assembled the generals and said to them that he thought he had a device by which he hoped to cause the best of the king's allies to leave him. This matter he revealed to that extent only; and with regard to their present circumstances, he said that they must do as follows:—every one must slaughter of the flocks of the Euboeans as many as he wanted, for it was better that their army should have them than the enemy; moreover he advised that each one should command his own men to kindle a fire: and as for the time of their departure he would see to it in such wise that they should come safe to Hellas. This they were content to do, and forthwith when they had kindled a fire they turned their attention to the flocks.

20. For in fact the Euboeans, neglecting the oracle of Bakis as if it had no meaning at all, had neither carried away anything from their land nor laid in any store of provisions with a view to war coming upon them, and by their conduct moreover they had brought trouble upon themselves. [15](#) For the oracle uttered by Bakis about these matters runs as follows:

*"Mark, when a man, a Barbarian, shall yoke the Sea with papyrus,  
Then do thou plan to remove the loud-bleating goats from Euboea."*

In the evils which at this time were either upon them or soon to be expected they might feel not a little sorry that they had paid no attention to these lines.

21. While these were thus engaged, there came to them the scout from Trachis: for there was at Artemision a scout named Polyas, by birth of Antikyra, to whom it had been appointed, if the fleet should be disabled, [16](#) to signify this to those at Thermopylai, and he had a vessel equipped and ready for this purpose; and similarly there was with Leonidas Abronichos son of Lysicles, an Athenian, ready to carry news to those at Artemision with a thirty-oared galley, if any disaster should happen to the land-army. This Abronichos then had arrived, and he proceeded to signify to them that which had come to pass about Leonidas and his army; and then when they were informed of it no longer put off their retreat, but set forth in the order in which they were severally posted, the Corinthians first and the Athenians last.

22. Themistocles however selected those ships of the Athenians which sailed best, and went round to the springs of drinking-water, cutting inscriptions on the stones there, which the Ionians read when they came to Artemision on the following day. These inscriptions ran thus: "Ionians, ye act not rightly in making expedition against the fathers of your race and endeavouring to enslave Hellas. Best of all were it that ye should come and be on our side; but if that may not be done by you, stand aside even now from the combat against us and ask the Carians to do the same as ye. If however neither of these two things is possible to be done, and ye are bound down by too strong compulsion to be able to make revolt, then in the action, when we engage battle, be purposely slack, remember that ye are descended from us and that our quarrel with the Barbarian took its rise at the first from you." Themistocles wrote thus, having, as I suppose,

two things together in his mind, namely that either the inscriptions might elude the notice of the king and cause the Ionians to change and come over to the side on which he was, or that having been reported and denounced to Xerxes they might cause the Ionians to be distrusted by him, and so he might keep them apart from the sea-fights.

23. Themistocles then had set these inscriptions: and to the Barbarians there came immediately after these things a man of Histaia in a boat bringing word of the retreat of the Hellenes from Artemision. They however, not believing it, kept the messenger under guard and sent swift-sailing ships to look on before. Then these having reported the facts, at last as daylight was spreading over the sky, the whole armament sailed in a body to Artemision; and having stayed at this place till mid-day, after this they sailed to Histaia, and there arrived they took possession of the city of Histaia and overran all the villages which lie along the coast in the region of Ellopia, which is the land of Histaia.

24. While they were there, Xerxes, after he had made his dispositions with regard to the bodies of the dead, sent a herald to the fleet: and the dispositions which he made beforehand were as follows:—for all those of his army who were lying dead at Thermopylai, (and there were as many as twenty thousand in all), with the exception of about a thousand whom he left, he dug trenches and buried them, laying over them leaves and heaping earth upon them, that they might not be seen by the men of the fleet. Then when the herald had gone over to Histaia, he gathered an assembly of the whole force and spoke these words: "Allies, king Xerxes grants permission to any one of you who desires it, to leave his post and to come and see how he fights against those most senseless men who looked to overcome the power of the king."

25. When the herald had proclaimed this, then boats were of all things most in request, so many were they who desired to see this sight; and when they had passed over they went through the dead bodies and looked at them: and every one supposed that those who were lying there were all Lacedemonians or Thespians, though the Helots also were among those that they saw: however, they who had passed over did not fail to perceive that Xerxes had done that which I mentioned about the bodies of his own dead; for in truth it was a thing to cause laughter even: on the one side there were seen a thousand dead bodies lying, while the others lay all gathered together in the same place, four thousand [17](#) of them. During this day then they busied themselves with looking, and on the day after this they sailed back to the ships at Histaia, while Xerxes and his army set forth upon their march.

26. There had come also to them a few deserters from Arcadia, men in want of livelihood and desiring to be employed. These the Persians brought into the king's presence and inquired about the Hellenes, what they were doing; and one man it was who asked them this for all the rest. They told them that the Hellenes were keeping the Olympic festival and were looking on at a contest of athletics and horsemanship. He then inquired again, what was the prize proposed to them, for the sake of which they contended; and they told them of the wreath of olive which is given. Then Tigranes [18](#) the son of Artabanos uttered a thought which was most noble, though thereby he incurred from the king the reproach of cowardice: for hearing that the prize was a wreath and not money, he could not endure to keep silence, but in the presence of all he spoke these words: "Ah! Mardonios, what kind of men are these against whom thou hast brought us to fight, who make their contest not for money but for honour!" Thus was it spoken by this man.

27. In the meantime, so soon as the disaster at Thermopylai had come about, the Thessalians sent a herald forthwith to the Phokians, against whom they had a grudge always, but especially because of the latest disaster which they had suffered: for when both the Thessalians themselves and their allies had invaded the Phokian land not many years before this expedition of the king, they had been defeated by the Phokians and handled by them roughly. For the Phokians had been shut up in Mount Parnassos having with them a soothsayer, Tellias the Eleian; and this Tellias contrived for them a device of the following kind:—he took six hundred men, the best of the Phokians, and whitened them over with chalk, both themselves and their armour, and then he attacked the Thessalians by night, telling the Phokians beforehand to slay every man whom they should see not coloured over with white. So not only the sentinels of the Thessalians, who saw these first, were terrified by them, supposing it to be something portentous and other than it was, but also after the sentinels the main body of their army; so that the Phokians remained in possession of four thousand bodies of slain men and shields; of which last they dedicated half at Abai and half at Delphi; and from the tithe of booty got by this battle were made the large statues which are contending for the tripod in front of the temple [19](#) at Delphi, and others similar to these are dedicated as an offering at Abai.

28. Thus had the Phokians done to the Thessalian footmen, when they were besieged by them; and they had done irreparable hurt to their cavalry also, when this had invaded their land: for in the pass which is by Hyampolis they had dug a great trench and laid down in it empty wine-jars; and then having carried earth and laid it on the top and made it like the rest of the ground, they waited for the Thessalians to invade their land. These supposing that they would make short work with the Phokians, [20](#) riding in full course fell upon the wine-jars; and there the legs of their horses were utterly crippled.

29. Bearing then a grudge for both of these things, the Thessalians sent a herald and addressed them thus: "Phokians, we advise you to be more disposed now to change your minds and to admit that ye are not on a level with us: for in former times among the Hellenes, so long as it pleased us to be on that side, we always had the preference over you, and now we have such great power with the Barbarian that it rests with us to cause you to be deprived of your land and to be sold into slavery also. We however, though we have all the power in our hands, do not bear malice, but let there be paid to us fifty talents of silver in return for this, and we will engage to avert the dangers which threaten to come upon your land."

30. Thus the Thessalians proposed to them; for the Phokians alone of all the people in those parts were not taking the side of the Medes, and this for no other reason, as I conjecture, but only because of their enmity with the Thessalians; and if the Thessalians had supported the cause of the Hellenes, I am of opinion that the Phokians would have been on the side of the Medes. When the Thessalians proposed this, they said that they would not give the money, and that it was open to them to take the Median side just as much as the Thessalians, if they desired it for other reasons; but they would not with their own will be traitors to Hellas.

31. When these words were reported, then the Thessalians, moved with anger against the Phokians, became guides to the Barbarian to show him the way: and from the land of Trachis they entered Doris; for a narrow strip [21](#) of the Dorian territory extends this way, about thirty furlongs in breadth, lying between Malis and Phokis, the region which was in ancient time called

Dryopis; this land is the mother-country of the Dorians in Peloponnese. Now the Barbarians did not lay waste this land of Doris when they entered it, for the people of it were taking the side of the Medes, and also the Thessalians did not desire it.

32. When however from Doris they entered Phokis, they did not indeed capture the Phokians themselves; for some of them had gone up to the heights of Parnassos,—and that summit of Parnassos is very convenient to receive a large number, which lies by itself near the city of Neon, the name of it being Tithorea,—to this, I say, some of them had carried up their goods and gone up themselves; but most of them had conveyed their goods out to the Ozolian Locrians, to the city of Amphissa, which is situated above the Crissaian plain. The Barbarians however overran the whole land of Phokis, for so the Thessalians led their army, and all that they came to as they marched they burned or cut down, and delivered to the flames both the cities and the temples:

33, for they laid everything waste, proceeding this way by the river Kephisos, and they destroyed the city of Drymos by fire, and also the following, namely Charadra, Erochos, Tethronion, Amphikaia, Neon, Pedieis, Triteis, Elateia, Hyampolis, Parapotamioi and Abai, at which last-named place there was a temple of Apollo, wealthy and furnished with treasuries and votive offerings in abundance; and there was then, as there is even now, the seat of an Oracle there: this temple they plundered and burnt. Some also of the Phokians they pursued and captured upon the mountains, and some women they did to death by repeated outrage.

34. Passing by Parapotamioi the Barbarians came to Panopeus, and from this point onwards their army was separated and went different ways. The largest and strongest part of the army, proceeding with Xerxes himself against Athens, entered the land of the Boeotians, coming into the territory of Orchomenos. Now the general body of the Boeotians was taking the side of the Medes, and their cities were being kept by Macedonians appointed for each, who had been sent by Alexander; and they were keeping them this aim, namely in order to make it plain to Xerxes that the Boeotians were disposed to be on the side of the Medes.

35. These, I say, of the Barbarians took their way in this direction; but others of them with guides had set forth to go to the temple at Delphi, keeping Parnassos on their right hand: and all the parts of Phokis over which these marched they ravaged; for they set fire to the towns of Panopeus and Daulis and Aiolis. And for this reason they marched in that direction, parted off from the rest of the army, namely in order that they might plunder the temple at Delphi and deliver over the treasures there to king Xerxes: and Xerxes was well acquainted with all that there was in it of any account, better, I am told, than with the things which he had left in his own house at home, seeing that many constantly reported of them, and especially of the votive offerings of Croesus the son of Alyattes.

36. Meanwhile the Delphians, having been informed of this, had been brought to extreme fear; and being in great terror they consulted the Oracle about the sacred things, whether they should bury them in the earth or carry them forth to another land; but the god forbade them to meddle with these, saying that he was able by himself to take care of his own. Hearing this they began to take thought for themselves, and they sent their children and women over to Achaia on the other side of the sea, while most of the men themselves ascended up towards the summits of Parnassos and carried their property to the Corykian cave, while others departed for refuge to



Amphissa of the Locrians. In short the Delphians had all left the town excepting sixty men and the prophet of the Oracle. [22](#)

37. When the Barbarians had come near and could see the temple, then the prophet, whose name was Akeratos, saw before the cell [23](#) arms lying laid out, having been brought forth out of the sanctuary, [24](#) which were sacred and on which it was not permitted to any man to lay hands. He then was going to announce the portent to those of the Delphians who were still there, but when the Barbarians pressing onwards came opposite the temple of Athene Pronaia, there happened to them in addition portents yet greater than that which had come to pass before: for though that too was a marvel, that arms of war should appear of themselves laid forth outside the cell, yet this, which happened straightway after that, is worthy of marvel even beyond all other prodigies. When the Barbarians in their approach were opposite the temple of Athene Pronaia, at this point of time from the heaven there fell thunderbolts upon them, and from Parnassos two crags were broken away and rushed down upon them with a great crashing noise falling upon many of them, while from the temple of Pronaia there was heard a shout, and a battle-cry was raised.

38. All these things having come together, there fell fear upon the Barbarians; and the Delphians having perceived that they were flying, came down after them and slew a great number of them; and those who survived fled straight to Boeotia. These who returned of the Barbarians reported, as I am informed, that in addition to this which we have said they saw also other miraculous things; for two men (they said) in full armour and of stature more than human followed them slaying and pursuing.

39. These two the Delphians say were the native heroes Phylacos and Autonoös, whose sacred enclosures are about the temple, that of Phylacos being close by the side of the road above the temple of Pronaia and that of Autonoös near Castalia under the peak called Hyampeia. Moreover the rocks which fell from Parnassos were still preserved even to my time, lying in the sacred enclosure of Athene Pronaia, into which they fell when they rushed through the ranks of the Barbarians. Such departure had these men from the temple.